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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000433

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STATE FOR EUR/SE, EB/TRA, DS
BRUSSELS FOR TSA, FRANKFURT FOR TSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2115

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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION ON SECURITY AT
SECONDARY AIRPORTS AND MASS TRANSIT

Classified By: Ambassador CPRies; reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY

(C) 1. On February 7, Transportation Minister Liapis told the Ambassador that the pilot program to use a private company for baggage screening at six of Greece's 39 secondary airports (outside of Athens) was operating successfully, but there are no immediate plans to extend the program to other secondary airports. The Ambassador urged Liapis to ensure that Greece's remaining secondary airports (particularly those with seasonal, international charter flights) reach an acceptable level of security. The local TSA Representative added that the approval of the newly developed Greek Civil Aviation Security Quality Control Program would enhance security at all Greek airports. The Aviation Security Quality Control Program is under review by the Minister and is expected to be approved sometime this year. On mass transit security, the lack of a central command for oversight and poor coordination between the Greek police, private security guards, and the Transportation Ministry continue to be an issue. End Summary.

Secondary Airport Security

12. (C) In a February 7 meeting with Minister of Transportation and Communications Michalis Liapis, the Ambassador discussed GoG's efforts to improve security at Greece's 39 secondary airports as well as its mass transit system. Commending the Minister on his initiative (together with the Ministry of Public Order) to phase in private company screening of checked baggage at six secondary airports, the Ambassador asked if the program will be extended to Greece's remaining 33 airports. Noting that the pilot program had been a success, Liapis indicated that his ministry had not yet developed plans for its extension to other secondary airports. He noted that GoG's focus had been on airports with international charter flights such as Crete and Rhodes. The Ambassador pointed out that there are considerable vulnerabilities at least 20 other airports (particularly in the Aegean islands) that also receive seasonal charter flights. In many cases, the police are not properly trained to screen baggage and passengers and do not want the responsibility.

13. (C) Liapis agreed that this was a problem, and recommended that Embassy's TSA Representative discuss this in further detail with his senior advisor, George Tsovas. The Ambassador and TSA Rep urged the Minister to proceed with the implementation of the Greek Civil Security Aviation Quality Control Program, which comprises EU and ICAO regulations on airport security. (The Aviation Quality Control Program was signed by the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority (HCAA) in December 2004 and sent to the Minister's office.)

Mass Transit

14. (C) The Ambassador complimented the GoG on its handling of the September 2004 bus hijacking in Athens, which demonstrated the effective interface between the Ministries of Transportation and Public Order that was developed in preparation for the 2004 Olympic Games. Liapis added that since the Games, the GoG has installed security systems at all train stations, as part of the C4I system that was developed for the Olympics by the U.S. firm SAIC. However, the TSA Rep pointed out that the mass transit system, in particular the metro, still does not have a center command that provides security oversight and direction to the various security forces. Tsovas agreed that a central command could be useful but that "we don't need to worry about the metro because it is well guarded." The TSA Rep would continue discussions with the Ministry and other authorities to push for mass transit security improvements.

Comment:

15. (C) In accordance with the recommendations of the April

2004 Athens mass transit security assessment conducted by
TSA, the GoG has yet to establish effective security

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coordination between the Greek National Police (GNP) and the
Ministry of Transportation that would have direct liaison
with metro, train, light rail and bus systems. The
Transportation Ministry is aware of the problem and is
considering legislation that would address security oversight
that would clearly define command, control, coordination,
crisis response and training. We will monitor this closely
and continue to urge GoG to address these security
vulnerabilities. End Comment.

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